

Galileo's Defense (May 10, 1633)

In an earlier interrogation, I was asked whether I had informed the Most Reverend Father Master of the Sacred Palace about the private injunction issued to me sixteen years ago by order of the Holy Office—"not to hold, defend, or teach in any way whatever" the opinion of the earth's motion and sun's stability-and I answered No. Since I was not asked the reason why I did not inform him, I did not have the opportunity to say anything else. Now it seems to me necessary to mention it, in order prove the absolute purity of my mind, always averse to using simulation and deceit in any of my actions.

I say, then, that at that time some of my enemies were spreading the rumor that I had been called by the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine in order to abandon some opinions and doctrines of mine, that I had had to abjure, that I had also received punishments for them, etc., and so I was forced to resort to His Eminence and to beg him to give me a certificate explaining why I had been called. I received this certificate, written by his own hand, and it is what I attach to the present statement. In it one clearly sees that I was only told not to hold or defend Copernicus's doctrine of the earth's motion and sun's stability; but one cannot see any trace that, besides this general pronouncement applicable to all, I was given any other special order. Having the reminder of this authentic certificate, handwritten by the one who issued the order himself, I did not try later to recall or give any other thought to the words used to give me orally the said injunction, to the effect that one cannot defend or hold, etc.; thus, the two phrases besides "holding" and "defending" which I hear are contained in the injunction given to me and recorded, that is, "teaching" and "in any way whatever," struck me as very new and unheard. I do not think I should be mistrusted about the fact that in the course of fourteen or sixteen years I lost any memory of them, especially since I had no need to give the matter any thought, having such a valid reminder in writing. Now, when those two phrases are removed and we retain only the other two mentioned in the attached certificate, there is no reason to doubt that the order contained in it is the same as the injunction issued by the decree of the Holy Congregation of the Index. From this I feel very reasonably excused for not notifying the Father Master of the Sacred Palace of the injunction given to me in private, the latter being the same as the one of the Congregation of the Index.

Given that my book was not subject to more stringent censures than those required by the decree of the Index, I followed the surest and most effective way to protect it and purge it of any trace of blemish. It seems to me that this is very obvious, since I handed it over to the supreme Inquisitor at a time when many books on the same subjects were being prohibited solely on account of the above-mentioned decree.

From the things I am saying, I think I can firmly hope that the idea of my having knowingly and willingly disobeyed the orders given me will be given no

credence by the Most Eminent and Most Prudent Lord judges. Thus, those flaws that can be seen scattered in my book were not introduced through the cunning of an insincere intention, but rather through the vain ambition and satisfaction of appearing clever above and beyond the average among popular writers; this was an inadvertent result of my writing, as I confessed in another deposition of mine. I am ready to make amends and compensate for this flaw by every possible means, whenever I may be either ordered or allowed by Their Most Eminent Lordships.

Finally, I am left with asking you to consider the pitiable state of ill health to which I am reduced, due to ten months of constant mental distress, and the discomforts of a long and tiresome journey in the most awful season and at the age of seventy; I feel I have lost the greater part of the years which my previous state of health promised me. I am encouraged to do this by the faith I have in the clemency and kindness of heart of the Most Eminent Lordships, my judges; and I hope that if their sense of justice perceives anything lacking among so many ailments as adequate punishment for my crimes, they will, I beg them, condone it out of regard for my declining old age, which I humbly also ask them to consider. Equally, I want them to consider my honor and reputation against the slanders of those who hate me, and I hope that when the latter insist on disparaging my reputation, the Most Eminent Lordships my judges will take it as evidence why it became necessary for me to obtain from the Most Eminent Lord Cardinal Bellarmine the certificate attached herewith.